II. REMARKS

Claims 10 and 13 have been amended. Accordingly, after entry of this amendment, claims 10-16 remain pending in the present application Applicants request entry of this Amendment.

Claim Objections

The examiner has objected to Claim 13 because of an informality. Accordingly, the Applicants have amended Claim 13, and respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw this objection.

Rejections Under 35 USC §112

The Examiner rejected Claims 10-16 under 35 USC §112, first paragraph as failing to comply with the written description requirement. Specifically, the Examiner asserts that the limitation "un-biased pivotal movement' which was added to claims 10 and 13 constitutes new matter.

The Applicants have amended claims 10 and 13 to remove the language "un-biased pivotal movement". The Applicants have amended claims 10 and 13 to include the language "to allow said connector rod to pivot freely in a second plane". The Applicants assert that this amendment does not constitute new matter. Referring to paragraph [0028] of the application as filed:

> "Referring to Figures 10 and 11, rather than having a flexible shaft portion **20**, the first end **12a** of the connector rod **10a** can alternatively be mounted to allow total pivotal freedom n the

vertical plane as well as allowing limited pivotal movement in the horizontal plane."

The specification as filed describes the invention as having "total pivotal freedom". Claims 10 and 13 have been amended to more clearly describe this aspect of the present invention. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw these rejections under 35 USC §112, first paragraph.

Rejections Under 35 USC §102

The Examiner rejected Claims 10-12 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by Wood Jr. (U.S. Patent 5,080,520). The Applicants respectfully assert that Wood Jr. does not teach each and every element of the invention as described in claim 10. Specifically, the Applicants assert that Wood Jr. does not teach a connector rod wherein "said first end including a radial spherical bearing disposed between said first end and the vehicle steering mechanism to allow said connector rod to pivot freely in a second plane, approximately orthogonal to the first plane, in response to horizontal movement of said second end of said connector rod in the second plane".

The Examiner asserts that Wood Jr. discloses a "radial spherical bearing", however, Wood Jr. specifically discloses "an elastomeric bearing". Referring to Lines 52-60 of column 3 of Wood Jr.:

"An elastomeric bearing 80 encapsulates the ball portion 72 of the ball member 70, and is bonded to the ball portion 72 and

adjacent portions of the projections 76 and 78. The bearing 80 supports the ball member 70 in an assembled position in the chamber in the socket member 40, as shown in FIG. 2. When the ball member 70 is in its assemble position, the ball portion 72 is centered on the longitudinal and transverse axes 46 and 60 of the socket member 40."

Referring to lines 67-68 of column 3 and lines 1-2 of column 4 of Wood Jr.:

"When the ball member 70 is moved relative to the socket member 40, the elastomeric bearing 80 exerts a bias against the ball member 70 urging the ball member 70 back to its assembled position as shown in FIG. 2."

The Applicants have amended claim 10 to more clearly describe the invention by specifying that the spherical bearing allows the connector rod to "pivot freely". The Applicants assert that the elastomeric bearing disclosed in Wood Jr. does not allow the shaft of Wood Jr. to pivot freely.

The portions of the specification from Wood Jr. cited above clearly describe the biasing effect of the elastomeric bearing. The elastomeric bearing 80 is "bonded" to the ball portion 72 and the elastomeric bearing 80 is "bonded" to adjacent portions of the projections 76 and 78. Any movement of the ball member 70 relative to the socket member 40 MUST cause distortion of the elsatomeric bearing 80. The elastic nature of the elastomeric bearing "exerts a bias against the ball member 70 urging the ball member 70 back to its assembled position". Therefore, any movement of the ball member 70 relative to the socket member 40 is always resisted by the elastomeric bearing 80, such that the ball member 70 is NOT allowed to move freely with respect to the socket member 40. In order for the ball member 70 to move relative to the socket member 40 a force

large enough to overcome the biasing force of the elastomeric bearing must be applied. The ball member 70 and the socket member 40 are not allowed to move freely with respect to one another.

Therefore, the Applicants assert that Wood Jr. does not disclose the present invention as described in claim 10, and that claim 10 is not anticipated by Wood Jr. Specifically, the Applicants assert that Wood Jr. does not disclose a spherical bearing that allows the connector rod to move freely. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw these rejections under 35 USC §102(b).

Rejections Under 35 USC § 103

The Examiner rejected Claims 13-16 under 35 USC §103(a) as being unpatentable over Wood jr. in view of Kondo (United States Patent No. 6,164860). In light of the arguments made above with regard to the §102 rejection of claims 10-12, the Applicants have amended claim 13 to more clearly describe the invention by specifying that the spherical bearing "allows the connector rod to pivot freely".

In light of the arguments presented above, the Applicants assert that Wood Jr. in view of Kondo does not disclose or suggest the present invention as described in claim 13, and that claim 13, as amended, is patentable over Wood Jr. in view of Kondo. Specifically, the Applicants assert that Wood Jr. in view of Kondo does not disclose a spherical bearing that allows the connector rod to

pivot freely. Accordingly, the Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw these rejections under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Conclusion

The Applicants assert that pending Claims 10-16 are patentable. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner grant allowance of these claims. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorneys for the Applicants via telephone if such communication would expedite this application.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: 2-28-2005 By: _____

Dan L. Thompson
Registration No. 54,490
Attorney for Applicant

BRINKS HOFER GILSON & LIONE
P.O. Box 10395
Chicago, IL 60610
Telephone: (734) 302-6000